

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 ACDA-12
/103 W

-----090964 231053Z /10

R 220815Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7053
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 2178

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, AF, PK
SUBJECT: AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S EVALUATION OF PRESIDENT
DAOUD'S VISIT TO PAKISTAN

REF: (A) KABUL 2046 (B) ISLAMABAD 2777

1. SUMMARY. DESCRIBING THE LEVEL OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN AS "THE HIGHEST IT HAS BEEN IN THIRTY YEARS," WAHEED ABDULLAH, AFGHANISTAN'S MINISTER-IN-CHARGE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ADVISED, HOWEVER, THAT ONWARD ACTION IN THE DETENTE WILL BE "QUITE A LONG PROCESS." END SUMMARY.

2. ON MARCH 19, ABDULLAH GAVE ME HIS VIEWS ABOUT PRESIDENT MOHAMMAD DAOUD'S RECENT MARCH 5 TO 8 VISIT TO PAKISTAN (REFTEL). ABDULLAH TERMED THE GRIP A GREAT SUCCESS, BUT ADVISED AGAINST EXPECTING ANY IMMEDIATE CONCRETE RESULTS. (COMMENT: SOME PAKISTANI
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DIPLOMATS AT KABUL HAD INDICATED EARLIER THAT THE PAKISTANI LEADERSHIP MIGHT HAVE BEEN HOPING FOR SOME OFFICIAL AFGHAN ACCEPTANCE OF THE DURAND LINE AS THEIR MUTUAL FRONTIER IN RETURN FOR GENERAL ZIA'S RECENT FULFILLMENT OF PROMISES HE HAD MADE TO DAOUD -- SUCH AS THE RELEASE OF WALI KHAN. END COMMENT)

3. MUSING ABOUT "WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT," ABDULLAH REPORTED THAT

BOTH SIDES HAD AGREED THAT THERE SHOULD BE AN INTENSIFICATION OF THE DIALOGUE THROUGH A GREATER EXCHANGE OF HIGH-RANKING POLITICAL FIGURES. THIS EXCHANGE, OBSERVED ABDULLAH, WOULD ASSIST THE TWO COUNTRIES "TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER, AND TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S PROBLEMS." (COMMENT: ABDULLAH IMPLIED THAT LEADERS OF VARIOUS PAKISTANI PARTIES MIGHT BE COMING TO AFGHANISTAN IN THIS CONNECTION. BECAUSE AFGHANISTAN ONLY HAS ONE CENTER OF POLITICAL POWER -- DAOUD, HIMSELF, THE "HIGH-RANKING" AFGHAN VISITORS TO PAKISTAN WILL PROBABLY BE CABINET MINISTERS.)

4. ASIDE FROM THIS PROPOSED EXCHANGE OF VISITORS, AS WELL AS A TRADE AGREEMENT, A TRANSIT AGREEMENT, AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AFGHAN-PAKISTANI JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION (REFTEL A), ABDULLAH DID NOT EXPECT ANYTHING "MORE SPECIFIC" TO RESULT FROM THE TRIP IN THE NEAR FUTURE. OBSERVING THAT THE LEVEL OF MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WAS "THE HIGHEST IT HAS BEEN IN THIRTY YEARS" (I.E., SINCE THE CREATION OF PAKISTAN IN 1947 -- OVER BITTER AFGHAN OBJECTIONS), ABDULLAH ADVISED THAT FURTHER IMPROVEMENT WOULD BE "QUITE A LONG PROCESS" AND THAT IT WOULD NOT BE "HELPFUL" TO MOVE TOO FAST. HE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT "EVEN" AGHA SHAHI, THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISER TO THE CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, WOULD AGREE WITH THIS ASSESSMENT.

5. ABDULLAH ALSO REPORTED THAT DAOUD DID NOT HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO HOLD ANY ORGANIZED PRIVATE TALKS WITH WALI KHAN, PAKISTAN'S PRINCIPAL PUSHTUN LEADER. WHENEVER THE TWO CAME TOGETHER, CONFIDENTIAL

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ACCORDING TO ABDULLAH, THE PRESS CORPS WOULD IMMEDIATELY CLUSTER AROUND THEM. HOWEVER, ABDULLAH THOUGHT THAT DAOUD AND WALI KHAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO EXCHANGE A FEW PRIVATE REMARKS WHENEVER THEY MET AT RECEPTIONS.

6. SINCE DAOUD'S RETURN HE HAS BEEN BUSILY VISITING KEY PUSHTUN TRIBAL AREAS ON HIS SIDE OF THE FRONTIER, DELIVERING PATRIOTIC SPEECHES IN NANGARHAR, KONAR, AND LAGHMAN PROVINCES -- AND PROBABLY HOLDING PRIVATE TALKS WITH LOCAL LEADERS. SOME LOCAL OBSERVERS THINK THAT DAOUD HAS FELT IT NECESSARY TO PROVIDE THIS POLITICAL "BALANCE" TO HIS VISIT TO PAKISTAN -- IN ORDER TO ASSURE THE HOME FOLK THAT HE HAS NOT TRADED AWAY THE FARM. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, WE NOTED THAT AJMAL KHATTAK, THE RECENTLY ELUSIVE POLITICAL EXILE FROM PAKISTAN, RESURFACED AT KABUL'S NAU-ROZ ("NEW YEAR") CEREMONY ON MARCH 21. HE WAS SEATED NEXT TO VICE PRESIDENT SYED ABDULILAH (DAOUD IS CURRENTLY HOLIDAYING IN JALALABAD), WITH WHOM HE FREQUENTLY WAS ENGAGED IN DEEP CONVERSATION.

7. COMMENT: ABDULLAH'S COMMENTS APPEAR TO CONFIRM THE VIEWS OF THOSE OBSERVERS WHO HAVE DOUBTED THAT EVEN A MAN OF DAOUD'S PRESTIGE AND POWER COULD EASILY ANNOUNCE ACCEPTANCE OF THE DURAND

LINE. EVERY AFGHAN RULER SINCE AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN HAS FELT COM-
PELLED TO ECHO THE LATTER'S ARGUMENT THAT HIS 1893 BORDER AGREE-
MENT WITH THE BRITISH WAS NOT INTENDED TO ESTABLISH A PERMANENT
INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY, BUT ONLY TO DELINEATE ZONES OF RESPECTIVE
RESPONSIBILITY IN THE PUSHTUN TRIBAL REGIONS. AS THE AFGHAN-
PAKISTANI RAPPROCHEMENT CONTINUES, HOWEVER, IT IS ENTIRELY
POSSIBLE THAT THIS ISSUE CAN EVENTUALLY BE LAID TO REST. I
ENTIRELY AGREE WITH AMBASSADOR HUMMEL (PARAGRAPH 4, REFTEL B)
THAT, WHILE APPLAUDING RAPPROCHEMENT IN GENERAL, WE SHOULD CON-
TINUE TO REFRAIN FROM PRESSURING EITHER PARTY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS, DEBRIEFINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KABUL02178
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780128-0060
Format: TEL
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780338/aaaabgdg.tel
Line Count: 126
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d067c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KABUL 2046, 78 ISLAMABAD 2777
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3242008
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S EVALUATION OF PRESIDENT DAOUD'S VISIT TO PAKISTAN
TAGS: PEPR, OVIP, AF, PK, (ABDULLAH, WAHEED), (DAOUD, MOHAMMAD)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d067c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014